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ABSTRACT

The first of a series to be published about the Wisconsin County and District Fair Study, this report provides information concerning: (1) the origin and present status of fairs in the United States, and in Wisconsin particularly, (2) the need for the present study, (3) a review of results of other related studies, and (4) an overview of the methodology of the present study, and reports expected from it. The primary focus of the study is an evaluation of the educational function of fairs. (DB)

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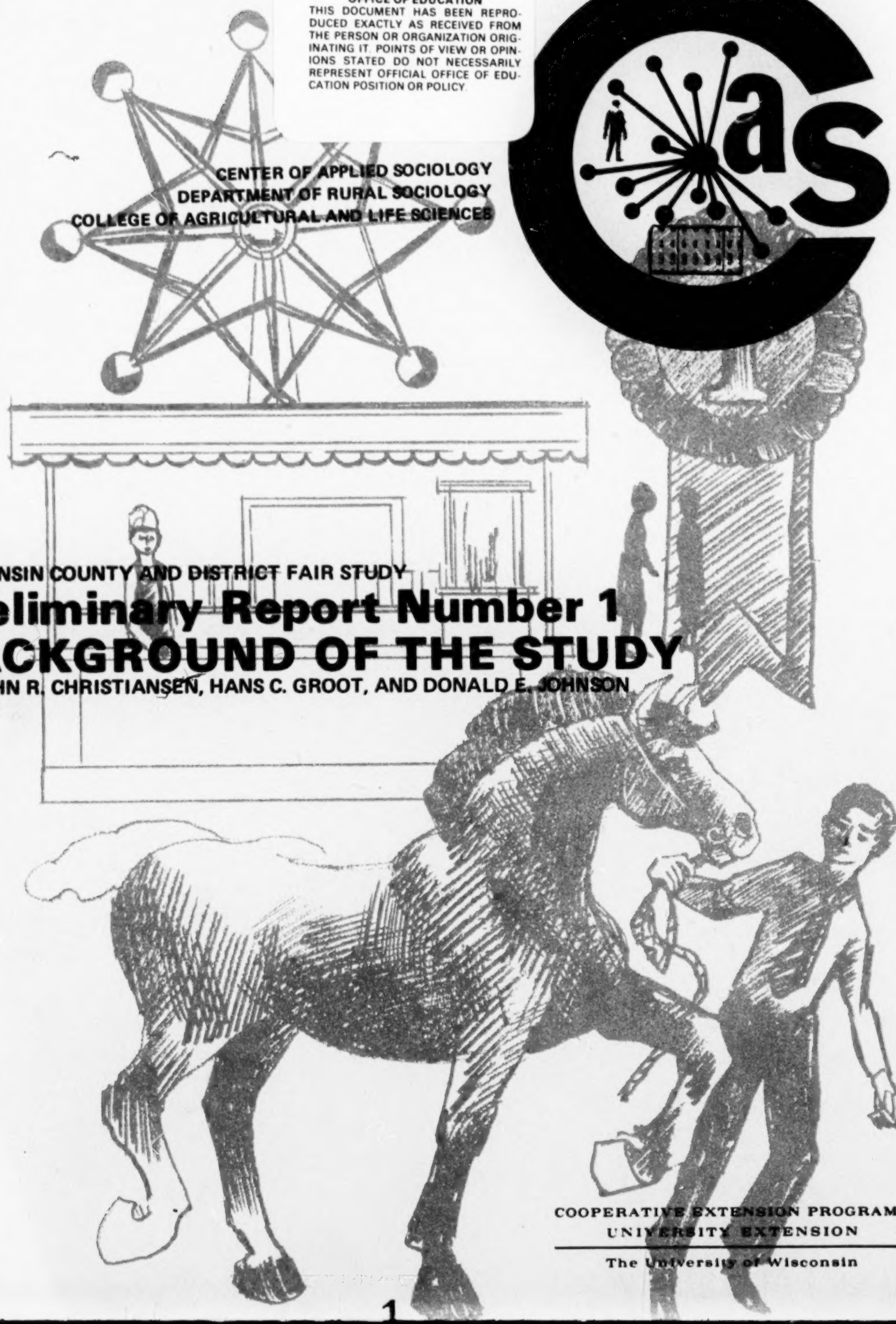

WISCONSIN COUNTY AND DISTRICT FAIR STUDY

Preliminary Report Number 1
BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

BY JOHN R. CHRISTIANSEN, HANS C. GROOT, AND DONALD E. JOHNSON

1971

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION PROGRAMS
UNIVERSITY EXTENSION
The University of Wisconsin

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University Extension and the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, University of Wisconsin, co-sponsors of the study; the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Local Affairs and Development, State of Wisconsin, which has legal authority for the supervision and coordination of fairs; the Wisconsin Association of Fairs and its President, Mr. W. A. Uthmeier; The Wisconsin Exposition Center, Vernon G. Wendland, Administrator; and Leslie C. Hayden, Supervisor of County and District Fairs.

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The leader of this project is Dr. John Christiansen, Visiting Professor of Sociology from Brigham Young University, assisted by Dr. Hans Groot, Department of Agricultural Journalism, and Mrs. Lorna Miller, specialist with the Center of Applied Sociology.

Donald E. Johnson, Director
Center of Applied Sociology
February, 1971

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WISCONSIN COUNTY AND DISTRICT FAIR STUDY:

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

PRELIMINARY REPORT #1

Introduction

Since August 1970, work has been progressing on a study of county and district fairs in Wisconsin. Although the primary focus of this study is an evaluation of the educational function of fairs, other aspects are also being studied.

The present report is the first of a series to be published about the Wisconsin County and District Fair Study. It is written to provide information concerning: (a) the origin and present status of fairs in the United States, and in Wisconsin particularly, (b) the need for the present study, (c) a review of results of other related studies, and (d) an overview of the methodology of the present study, and reports expected from it.

The Growth of Fairs in the United States

So accustomed are we in the United States to the effects of modern agriculture that it is difficult to imagine a time when agriculture was not as it is today. For example, it is hard for us to imagine a time when there were no distinct breeds of cattle, enclosed farms, or systematic fertilizing of the land; not to mention farmers' cooperatives, agricultural experiment stations, hybrid seeds, and farm machines. Yet, such conditions existed less than 200 years ago in Europe and America, and still exist today in many parts of the world.[1]

About the same time the industrial revolution was taking place, a similar revolution occurred in agriculture, with equally striking results. Together with efforts of gentlemen farmers and the formation of agricultural

societies, agricultural fairs were important parts of that agricultural revolution.

Gentlemen farmers of England and America were in large measure responsible for the remarkable agricultural progress of the eighteenth century. These men, unlike the working farmer, possessed leisure, money, equipment, property and the ability to communicate the results of their efforts. Thus, improved practices of cultivation, crop rotation and selective breeding resulted from the work of such gentlemen farmers as Jethro Tull, Charles Townsend and Robert Blakewell of England.[2] In America prominent men in political and intellectual life aided agricultural progress. Benjamin Franklin and the American Philosophical Society encouraged the improvement of agricultural methods through the development of labor-saving inventions and the application of science. George Washington corresponded with the English agricultural improvers. Arthur Young and Sir Arthur Sinclair made Mount Vernon into a model farm and conducted numerous experiments with plants, machinery and methods. Thomas Jefferson searched Europe for an upland rice, unsuccessfully introduced olives into this country, and conducted experiments in crop rotation, soil fertility, conservation and farm machinery.[3]

Another enterprise of these gentlemen farmers was the organization of agricultural societies. These were organized in England as early as 1723, and in America by 1784.[4] They were devoted principally to the dissemination of general scientific information and to the encouragement of experimentation with new implements, plants, and methods of cultivation. By 1852 there were about 300 agricultural societies, and by 1860, the United States Agricultural Society listed 941.[5]

Efforts were made by the agricultural societies to recognize outstanding farmers. It was only a short time following the awarding of medals to farmers that agricultural fairs were begun in the United States by these societies.

The Berkshire Agricultural Society of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, in 1811, was the first known sponsor of a competitive display of livestock in the U.S.--awarding cash prizes for the best livestock exhibited.[6] Other agricultural societies quickly adopted the Berkshire innovation.

New societies were formed around the innovation of competitive exhibits, and state aid was granted to them. Maine gave state aid to these societies beginning in 1832. Ohio began given state aid in 1833, and New York in 1841.[7]

By 1900, the number of agricultural societies had reached a zenith and began to decline. Stock companies owned by local merchants and farmers began to be organized in increasing numbers and take over the operation of the fairs on a county-wide basis. Most of the states granted them a certain measure of public aid, but usually with the stipulation that such money was to be distributed as prizes, rather than used to acquire physical facilities.

During this same time, state fairs came into existence. Owing to their broader appeal and other reasons, state fairs usually were more closely tied into state financing than were county fairs.[8]

Presently more than 3,000 state, district and county fairs are held in the United States. There are also 800 provincial and district fairs in Canada, and an estimated 14,000 elsewhere around the world.[9] These fairs feature industrial exhibits, as well as demonstrations and

displays aimed at livestock, horticultural and agricultural advancement. Special emphasis is placed on educational activities such as those sponsored by 4-H Clubs, Future Farmers of America and Future Homemakers of America organizations, and similar groups. As a result of their accepted value in improving agriculture, these fairs receive financial support from state and local governments.

Fairs in Wisconsin

Past Fair History

The first reported county fair in Wisconsin took place at Waukesha in October 1842 under the sponsorship of the Milwaukee County Agricultural Society. The fair lasted only one day, and premiums were awarded which totaled $40.[10]

Another of the early fairs was that sponsored by the Kenosha County Agricultural Society at Jackson's Tavern in the town of Bristol on October 10, 1850. During that same month, a fair was also held by the East Troy Agricultural Society in Walworth County. Of this fair, the East Troy Society secretary wrote:

> "there was a good exhibition of stock...and premiums were awarded...several competitors...gained for themselves great praise by their plowing."[11]

Four additional county agricultural societies conducted fairs in 1851. Moreover, the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society was organized in 1851, and in October of that same year sponsored the first state fair in Janesville.[12]

Increasingly, agricultural societies were formed and fairs held until the Civil War brought an abrupt drop in fair activities. By 1875, however, agricultural societies again were conducting fifty-two annual

fairs throughout the state, and by 1900, the number of local fairs had increased to 73.[13]

In addition to county and state fairs, "community fairs" have been held frequently in Wisconsin. Without listing all the community fairs, an Experiment Station Bulletin written by C. J. Galpin and Emily F. Hoag in 1919 named at least 25 such fairs.[14]

The Wisconsin State Legislature started offering financial assistance to county agricultural societies in 1856. To each society that would raise $100 from outside sources, the state paid a like amount. This type of matching aid was similar to that being offered in other states.

In 1857, the state legislature enacted measures which exempted fair property from taxation and which permitted county boards of supervisors to levy property taxes for payments of up to $400 to their county agricultural societies. With this money the societies could pay premiums and improve or purchase buildings or grounds.

In 1858, state aid was made provisional to agricultural societies on the basis of their being non-discriminatory and filing annual reports of their fairs' activities. The 1858 law also provided measures for greater policing of county fairs.

The growth of fairs was again encouraged by the Wisconsin legislature in 1885 when it agreed to pay $200 to each agricultural society in the state which raised a similar amount from its own resources and, in 1889, by paying local societies 40 percent of the first $3,000 that each society spent on fair premiums the previous year. Moreover, counties were permitted to purchase land valued up to $8,000 for their fairs, with all improvements on this land made by agricultural societies becoming county property.[15]

Present Fairs

During 1970 about 100 fairs were held in Wisconsin, excluding the State Fair. Of this number, some 24 fairs did not receive a subsidy from the state, although at least some received aid from county governments. The remaining 76 fairs, designated by the Wisconsin Association of Fairs as "County and District fairs," received state aid.

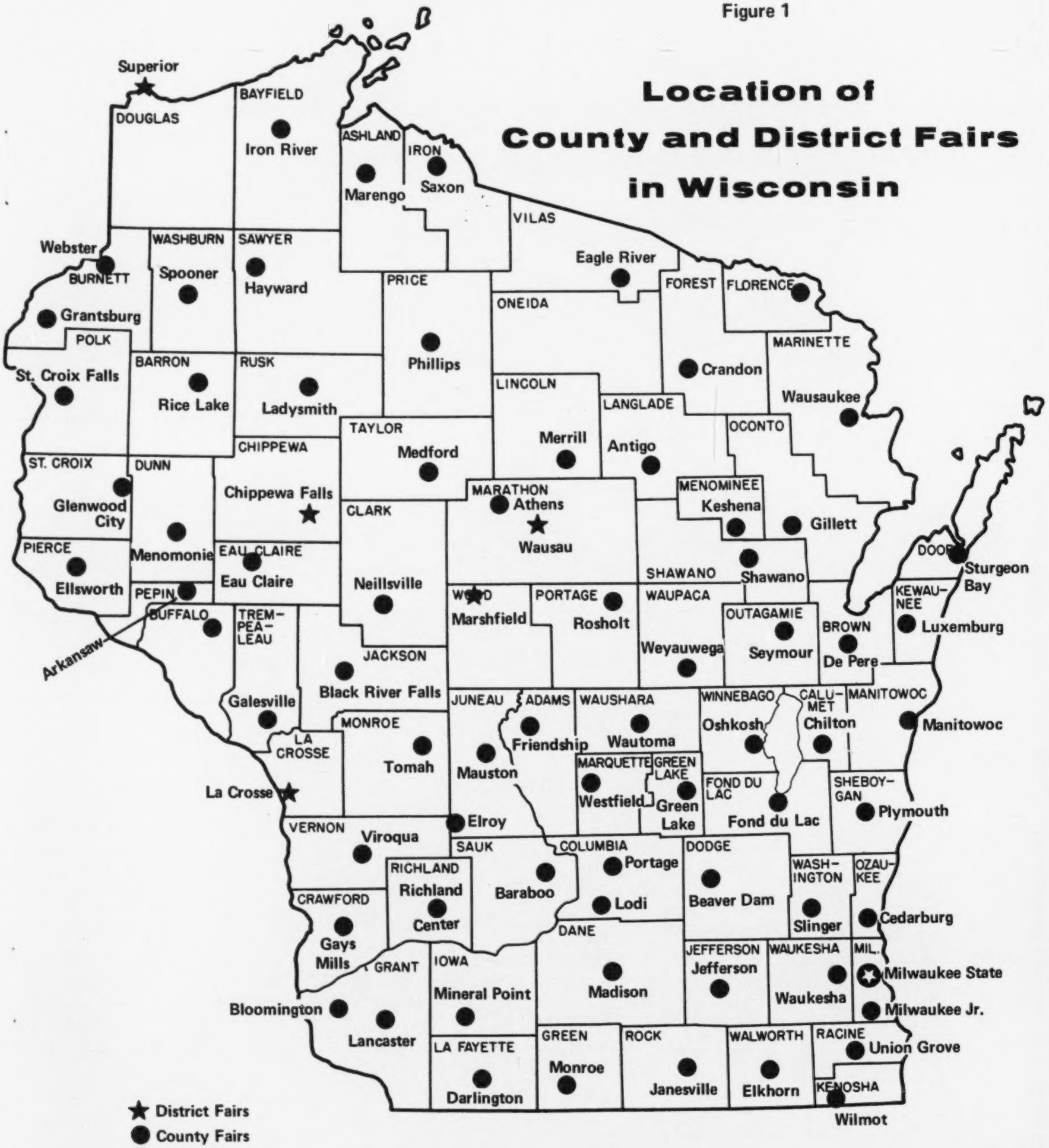
Five fairs held in 1970 were "district fairs" and 71 were "county fairs." The five district fairs were: Northern Wisconsin State Fair at Chippewa Falls; LaCrosse Inter-State Fair, LaCrosse; Central Wisconsin State Fair, Marshfield; Tri-State Fair, Superior; and the Wisconsin Valley Fair, Wausau. The district fairs' activities were directed toward attracting participation on a multi-county basis. Moreover, two of the fairs operated on a multi-state basis. However, no state aid is used to pay premiums to out-of-state exhibitors.

On the other hand, the county fairs direct their major efforts toward people living within the boundaries of the counties where the fairs are held. A few counties have more than one fair.

People are attending Wisconsin's fairs in greater numbers than ever before.[16] During 1969, 1,629,343 people either paid admission fees to attend 47 state-supported county and district fairs which charged an admission, or were admitted with those who had paid. An estimated 625,000 additional persons attended the 29 fairs which do not charge for admission to fairgrounds.[17] Thus, approximately 2,254,000 people attended Wisconsin's county and district fairs in 1969. An additional 1,022,793 people attended the State Fair in 1969 (934,156 attended in 1970) and thousands of other people attended other fairs not supported by the state.[18] Although over-lapping in attendance occurs, and out-of-state residents attend in

Figure 1

Location of County and District Fairs in Wisconsin



considerable numbers as well, the total number of fair-goers in Wisconsin may approach three-fourths of the state's 1970 population of 4,417,933.[19]

Attendance trends for county and district fairs have shown a gradual increase in the last decade. In 1959, 1,282,879 people attended state-aided county and district fairs compared with 1,629,434 in 1969. This represents a 27 percent increase in attendance over the past 10 years.

A decrease in both the number of exhibitors and the number of exhibits has occurred at state-aided county and district fairs in the past 10 years, however. In 1959 there were 85,327 exhibitors who entered one or more exhibits, whereas in 1969 there were 70,220 exhibitors. These figures represent an 18 percent decrease in total exhibitors (that is, individuals who enter one or more exhibits in competition with others) in the 10 year period. The number of Junior-Class exhibitors decreased by 19 percent during the decade as compared with a 9 percent decrease among Open-Class exhibitors. The number of Junior-Class exhibitors far outnumbered the Open-Class exhibitors, however. In 1969 there were 61,710 Junior-Class exhibitors, as compared with 8,510 Open-Class exhibitors at state-aided county and district fairs.

During the last 10 years there has been a decrease of 16 percent in the total number of exhibits at state-supported county and district fairs in Wisconsin. In 1959 321,482 exhibits were entered by Junior-Class exhibitors and 106,865 by Open-Class exhibitors, for a total of 428,347 exhibits. However, in 1969 these numbers were 267,288 and 94,202, respectively; the total being 361,490. Thus, the number of Junior-Class exhibitors has decreased by 17 percent in that decade as compared with a 12 percent decrease among Open-Class exhibitors.

Total money available to state-aided county and district fairs for premiums from all sources including state aid now amounts to nearly a half million dollars each year. Thus, for fairs held in 1969 $482,166 was paid to exhibitors of which the state paid $325,714 or 67 percent. The remaining 33 percent came from other sources. Seventy percent of the total went to Junior-Class exhibitors and the remaining 30 percent was awarded to Open-Class exhibitors.[20] Between 1959 and 1969 the amount of premium money paid increased by seven percent, with the state's contribution increasing by nine percent, from $299,420 to $325,714. The state legislature appropriated $340,000 for state aid to county and district fairs in 1970. The state pays 80 percent of the first $5,000 and state-aided fairs authorize for premiums and 50 percent of the next $5,000 up to a maximum of $10,000 per fair. The 1969 report showed that only the Elkhorn Fair received the maximum.[21]

The average total amount in premiums paid each exhibitor in 1969 amounted to $6.87. The average was $5.45 for each Junior-Class exhibitor and $17.17 for each Open-Class exhibitor.[22] This figure represents an increase of 30 percent over the 1959 average of $5.28. Such an increase represents a modest increase in real value despite the shrinking value of the dollar owing to inflation. Without the decrease in the number of exhibitors and exhibits, however, the average value of the premiums paid would not have kept up with inflationary trends.

Fairs in Other States

Nearly all states and Canadian provinces have fairs. County and district fairs are particularly numerous in the following Midwest states: Minnesota, Iowa, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin; and in the West, California.

To provide a basis for evaluating Wisconsin's county and district fairs, comparative data is given below for Minnesota, Illinois, and California. (Table 1).

Minnesota

Number of Fairs. Compared with the 76 Wisconsin county and district fairs which received state aid, Minnesota had 96. Nine counties in Minnesota had two fairs each, as compared with five such counties in Wisconsin (Burnett, Columbia, Grant, Juneau and Marathon).

Attendance. Attendance at state-aided county and district fairs in Minnesota was about 14 percent more than that in Wisconsin. The 1969 attendance totals were 2,558,390 and an estimated 2,254,000 for Minnesota and Wisconsin, respectively. The average number of persons attending Minnesota's state-aided county and district fairs in 1969 was 26,650, or 10 percent less than the 29,600 average for Wisconsin's fairs.

Exhibitors. The total number of exhibitors at Minnesota's state-aided county and district fairs was 13 percent higher than in Wisconsin with 79,324 and 70,220 exhibitors respectively. The average number of exhibitors per fair, however, was reversed. Wisconsin had an average of 924 exhibitors participating in each fair as compared with 826 in Minnesota.

Exhibits. Minnesota had fewer exhibits shown at county and district fairs than did Wisconsin. There were 289,693 exhibits shown at state-aided fairs in Minnesota, compared with 361,490 exhibits in Wisconsin. The average number of exhibits per fair in Minnesota was 3,018, whereas the corresponding figure in Wisconsin was 4,756.

State Aid. The amount of money provided for county and district fairs in Minnesota, during 1969 by the state was 63 percent of that provided

Table 1.--Comparison of County and District Fairs in California, Illinois, Minnesota and Wisconsin, according to Selected Characteristics, 1969.

Selected Characteristics	States			
	California	Illinois	Minnesota	Wisconsin
Number of fairs	74	100	96	76
Attendance	8,000,000	3,512,867	2,558,390	2,254,000**
Average per fair	117,568	35,129	26,650	29,600**
% of 1970 state population	44%	32%	68%	52%**
Number of exhibitors	D.N.A.	D.N.A.	79,324	70,220
Average per fair	---	---	826	924
Number of exhibits	462,779	281,592	289,693	361,490
Average per fair	6,254	2,816	3,018	4,756
% of 1970 state population	2.3%	2.6%	7.7%	8.3%
Amount of state aid	4,725,000	1,283,784	204,000	325,714
Average per fair	63,851	12,838	2,125	4,286
Amount of county aid	N.I.	N.I.	618,941	295,061
Average per fair	---	---	6,447	3,882
Rental income	D.N.A.*	855,605	172,309	158,364
Average per fair	---	8,556	1,795	2,084
Total expenditures	16,300,000**	6,264,347	1,892,285	3,164,447
Average per fair	220,270	62,643	19,711	41,637

D.N.A. = Data Not Available
N.I. = None Indicated
* With 11,231,000 people using fairground facilities valued at $231 million other than at fairtime, a considerable income is indicated.
**Estimated

Sources: Amusement Business, April 4, 1970; Reports of the Agricultural and Industrial Fairs Receiving Aid from the State of Illinois in 1969; 1969 Statistical Report of Minnesota County and District Fairs; 1969 Report on Wisconsin County and District Fairs.

such fairs in Wisconsin. Minnesota's legislature provided $204,000 to its county and district fairs in 1969, whereas Wisconsin's legislature provided (approximately) $324,000. The average amount of state aid per fair in Minnesota was $2,125 compared with $4,259 in Wisconsin.

County Aid. The total amount of county aid provided to state-aided county and district fairs in Minnesota during 1969 was about double that provided in Wisconsin. Minnesota's counties gave $618,941 to state-aided county and district fairs in 1969; an average of $6,447 per fair, whereas Wisconsin's counties gave a total of $295,061 to their fairs in 1969, an average of $3,882 per fair.

Minnesota's fairs received $822,941 from both state and county funds compared with $620,775 in Wisconsin for 1969 fairs. Thus, Minnesota's fairs received $202,166 or 33 percent more from state and county funds for 1969 than did fairs in Wisconsin. The counties in Minnesota contribute considerably more than in Wisconsin whereas the state contributes less.

Rentals. Rentals for the use of grounds and facilities brought in more money for Minnesota's fairs than they did in Wisconsin during 1969--$172,309 and $158,364, respectively. However, owing to there being fewer fairs, the average rental income per fair was higher in Wisconsin than in Minnesota, with average incomes amounting to $2,084 and $1,795, respectively.

Expenditures. Total expenditures including premiums for Minnesota's state-aided county and district fairs amounted to $1,892,285 in 1969. The corresponding figure was $3,164,447 in Wisconsin. In both states receipts were slightly higher than expenditures.

Illinois

Number of Fairs. Illinois had an even 100 state-aided county fairs in 1969, compared to the 76 state-aided county and district fairs in

Wisconsin. Ten Illinois counties had two such fairs and one county--Livingston--had three state-aided fairs.[23]

Attendance. Estimated attendance at Illinois' county fairs was considerably higher than in Wisconsin. In 1969, 3,512,867 attended Illinois state-aided county fairs compared with 2,254,000 in Wisconsin. The average attendance at each Illinois fair was 35,129, compared with 29,600 for Wisconsin.

Exhibitors and Exhibits. Comparable data concerning the number of exhibitors at county fairs is lacking for Illinois. However, there were 281,593 exhibitis entered compared with 361,490 in Wisconsin, or 22 percent fewer. The average number of exhibits per fair in Illinois was 2,816 compared with 4,756 in Wisconsin.

State Aid. The amount of state aid paid to county fairs in Illinois was considerably higher than that paid in Wisconsin. A total of $1,283,784 in state aid was paid to Illinois fairs in 1969--an average of $12,838 per fair. As previously noted, the total state aid actually paid to Wisconsin's county and district fairs in 1969 was $323,665--an average of $4,259 per fair.

State aid given by Illinois to county fairs follows a formula similar to that in Wisconsin. However, Illinois does provide for reimbursements to fairs for "the rehabilitation of its grounds as follows: 100% of the first $2,000 or any part thereof, and 50% of the next $6,000 or any part thereof." The formula continues in Illinois for further expenditures.

No indication of county aid being paid to county fairs in Illinois is indicated in the 1969 Illinois report.

Rentals. Income other than during the time fairs were held amounted to $855,605 for Illinois county fairs, as compared with $158,364 in Wisconsin.

Expenditures. Total expenditures of Illinois' county fairs was about double that of Wisconsin's. Illinois' county fairs spent $6,264,347 in 1969 compared with $3,164,447 in Wisconsin. However, relative to the populations of the two states Wisconsin's fairs spent more.

California

Number of Fairs. California had 74 state-supported county and district fairs in 1969. California has more district fairs (50) than county fairs (24). Wisconsin with its 76 state-supported county and district fairs had 2 more than California.

Attendance. A considerably larger number of people attended county and district fairs in California than in Wisconsin. Approximately 8,700,000 people attended county and district fairs in California compared with an estimated 2,254,000 in Wisconsin.[24]

Exhibitors and Exhibits. Comparable data concerning the number of exhibitors at county and district fairs in California is lacking. An approximate figure of 60,000 is given, however, for 4-H Club members, Future Farmers of America and "other young people" who "take part in work projects which lead to competition at fairs."[25] In Wisconsin there were 67,710 junior exhibitors in 1969.

California had about one and one-fourth as many exhibits at county and district fairs as did Wisconsin. California's exhibits numbered 462,779 compared with 361,490 in Wisconsin. The average number of exhibits per state-aided county and district fair in California was 6,254 compared with 4,756 in Wisconsin.

State Aid. Although directly comparable data are not available, it is estimated that California spends about 14 times as much in state funds for county and district fairs as does Wisconsin. All fairs in

California, including two citrus fairs and the Cal Expo, divide the $8,000,000 which is appropriated annually by the state for their support. Of this figure, California statutes permit $5,750,000 or 72 percent to be used for operating expenses with the remaining $2,250,000 or 18 percent to be allocated for capital outlays.[26] The estimated share of the $8,000,000 given to county and district fairs during their 1969-1970 year was $4,725,000 compared with $326,000 in Wisconsin.

In California, the nonfair attendance exceeds the fairtime attendance. The fair facilities which have been built steadily over the years are used for a variety of recreational, educational, cultural, agricultural commercial, entertainment and other activities. For example, fair facilities in the Sacramento Valley Area were used by 1,457,227 people for the following nonfair activities in 1969:

> "Circus, auto racing, sports, trade shows, livestock auction sales, horse stabling and training, basketball, rodeo, motorcycle racing, conventions, lapidary shows, religious meetings and conventions, wedding receptions, school and college graduations, dances, scout camporees, 4-H and FFA field days, safety and fire demonstrations, industrial-equipment shows, barbecues."[27]

In summary, the situation regarding county and district fairs in Minnesota and Wisconsin appears similar, with California and Illinois also being alike, but less so. The fact that pari-mutual betting is legal in California and Illinois perhaps accounts for the relatively high amounts of state aid spent on their fairs. Conversely, while the amount of state aid expended in Minnesota and Wisconsin is relatively modest, the amount of local support as shown in county aid is high.

Although California and Illinois have a greater number of people who attend their fairs than Wisconsin and Minnesota, the percentages of fair attenders to the states' populations are higher in the latter two states and again suggest relatively strong local support and involvement.

Moreover, the educational function of county and district fairs, as evidenced by exhibits, appears to be higher in Minnesota and Wisconsin than in California and Illinois.

California and Illinois fairs seem to emphasize recreational activities more than do those in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Not only is recreation emphasized at fair time, but throughout the year. California in particular, in continuing to build up the physical facilities at its county and district fair sites, has been able to make use of them as year 'round enterprises. The activities taking place at the fairgrounds during interim periods drew more people than during fair time.

The Need for Evaluating Wisconsin's County and District Fairs

The decade of the 1970's will be a crucial one for county and district fairs in Wisconsin. For a variety of reasons the State of Wisconsin, its counties, and the various fair associations are faced with important policy decisions about the future of fairs in this state. Those decisions likely will determine whether fairs survive and if so, what their functions will be for the remainder of this century.

What has been happening to make this a period of crucial decision-making for fairs? First, as noted previously in this report, while attendance has increased, the number of exhibitors has declined at many fairs. Several fairs are in a precarious financial position and many are operating with dilapidated buildings and inadequate facilities. Many county and district fairs are heavily dependent upon state aid for paying premiums to exhibitors. The state fair seems to be in a faltering position, with the transfer of funds from it to county and district fairs via the General Purpose Revenue Fund affecting its ability to improve its facilities.[28]

In 1960, following a recommendation of the Kellett Commission, the authority for supervision and regulation of fairs was transferred from the State Department of Agriculture to the State Department of Local Affairs and Development (LAD). Due in part to the heavy emphasis on agricultural exhibits at most fairs, support has grown for a partial or complete return of exposition authority to the State Department of Agriculture. Given the uncertainties of continued financial aid from the state fair, and the basic question of what important functions the county and district fairs are (or should be) performing, a subcommittee of the State Board of Agriculture recently issued the following report:

> "The special Fairs Committee established by Board action and the Wisconsin Association of Fairs have strongly urged and recommended that steps be taken to transfer the supervision and administration of County and District Fairs to the State Department of Agriculture.
>
> "Further, an interagency agreement between the State Department of Agriculture and the Department of Local Affairs & Development as urged by the Board's Special Fairs committee has been executed in which it is mutually agreed that the State Department of Agriculture will represent agricultural interests for the future conduct of a Wisconsin State Fair.
>
> "Based upon this action and in anticipation that state funds for County and District Fairs will be requested of the 1971 Legislature, it is recommended that the State Board of Agriculture ask that the department, in cooperation with the Department of Local Affairs & Development, immediately inventory the entire Fair situation in the state by making an objective inquiry into the appropriate functions of County and District Fairs; the number needed; the optimum locations; the necessary levels, allocation and sources of financial support; and the relationship of the County and District Fair functions to a State Fair."[29]

The subcommittee's request for an inventory of the fair situation led to an agreement by the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and the University Extension Service of the University of Wisconsin to jointly sponsor an evaluation study of county and district fairs. Responsibility for the research was assumed by the Center of Applied Sociology, a unit of the Department of Rural Sociology.

Researchers of the Center of Applied Sociology are investigating several questions which, while not answering all of the subcommittee's questions directly, provide a basis for answering them. Following is a partial list of questions to be answered in the study:

1. How valuable--educationally, socially, recreationally, and economically--are county and district fairs to the people of Wisconsin?
2. Are there fairs which should be consolidated?
3. What are the most serious problems now facing county and district fairs?
4. How might county and district fairs be improved?
5. What kinds of benefits are derived by adults and youths from exhibiting at county and district fairs?
6. How important are premiums as inducements to exhibiting?
7. What kinds of people attend county and district fairs today, and why do they attend?
8. What social and economic impact do fairs have on local communities?
9. How important to commercial exhibitors is exhibiting at fairs?
10. What are the negative social consequences of fairs, if any?
11. What level of state aid to fairs will the citizens of the state support?
12. How interdependent are the county and district fairs with the state fair?

Answers to these questions will provide a more sound and rational basis for making the policy decisions called for in the subcommittee report. A review of previous research, the specific types of research currently under way and the types of information and reports which will be forthcoming are outlined below.

Review of Previous Research

During the past decade, a number of both formal and informal studies have been conducted on the role and function of Wisconsin fairs. A general conclusion from their results is that fairs do seem to fill a need and that, as institutions affecting the lives of both urban and rural people, they should be continued--but that there is considerable room for improvement.

Five relevant studies will be reviewed in this section. These are:

A. Platos, John A. "The Function and Status of Wisconsin County Fairs as Seen by Wisconsin County Agents." Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, Department of Agricultural and Extension Education, Unpublished M.S. Thesis, 1964.

This study involved questionnaires mailed to all county extension personnel. Of the 246 questionnaires sent out, 217 or 88.7 percent were analyzed. Of the 217 agents reporting, 62 were county agents, 94 assistant agents, and 61 were home agents. Included were 28 county agents who also served as fair secretaries.

B. Hovland, Maurice J. "Public Appraisal of the Washington County Fair." Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, Cooperative Extension (Education), Unpublished M.S. Thesis, 1965.

For this study, questionnaires were handed out to a non-random sample of people who entered the Washington County Fairgrounds on a specific day at a predetermined hour. Of the 605 questionnaires handed out, 329 or 54 percent were mailed in.

C. Halbach, Richard F. "Survey of Sauk County 4-H Leaders and Exhibitors." Baraboo, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Extension Office, Unpublished Survey, 1970.

D. Ryan, John W. "The Wisconsin State Fair: Its Modern Role and Objectives." Madison, Wiconsin: University of Wisconsin, University Extension Division, Bureau of Government, Research and Advisory Service, Report NS 2, February 1960.

This study was undertaken at the request of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture. Its findings are based on an at-the-fair opinion pool conducted among 8,341 respondents as well as mailed questionnaires returned by 128 livestock exhibitors, 30 fur exhibitors, 75 home economics exhibitors, 120 industrial exhibitors and concessionaires, 54 county agents,

208 professionally oriented people (Vo-Ag instructors, county demonstration agents, rural youth leaders), and 682 people who had attended previous state fairs.

E. Bernard, George "State Fair Survey." West Allis, Wisconsin: State Fair Publicity Office, Unpublished Survey, 1970.

This last study is an informal, nonrandom survey conducted among 1,010 people who attended the 1970 Wisconsin State Fair.

Though each of these five studies was conducted for its own unique purpose and asked different questions, an attempt to consolidate some of the pertinent findings has been made. Wherever possible, these are reported as part of some general evaluative questions of fairs in Wisconsin.

Who Goes to Fairs?

Age. Two studies (B and E) report data on the age of fairgoers. The majority, it appears, are under 50 years of age with most people falling in the 20 to 40 year category.

Residence. Data from the Washington County Fair suggest that fairs have a greater attraction for rural than urban people. One-third of the fairgoers came from farms although farmers made up only one-fourth of the county population. Similarly, rural nonfarm residents accounted for 28 percent of the fairgoers, while only 22 percent of the population was in that category. On the other hand, 29 percent of the respondents came from cities and towns with populations of more than 2500 even though those urban places made up 38 percent of the total county population.

The 1970 state fair study considered place of residence of fairgoers in terms of driving time. The data show that the majority of people who attended the fair lived within less than one hour driving time. This finding suggests that the majority of that fair's patrons come from urban places. In comparison, the 1960 state fair study found that roughly half of the people who attended the state fair lived in the Milwaukee Metropolitan area.

Are Fairgoers Likely to Have Attended Other Fairs?

Both county and state fair studies suggest that a large number of fairgoers are repeaters and that many of them attend more than one fair each year. Some 77 percent of the people who attended the Washington County Fair, for example, had also visited the fair the previous year compared to 66 percent of the people who attended both the 1969 and 1970 State Fairs. The Washington County study also reported that 29 percent of its respondents attended one other fair, 34 percent two other fairs, and 21 percent three other fairs that year.

Why Do People Go to the Fair?

Most people give more than one reason for going to a fair. The range of responses indicates that fairs fill social, education, and entertainment needs. About one-third of the Washington County Fair visitors cited such reasons as visiting old friends, viewing commercial exhibits, the midway, and because a family member was exhibiting. A frequent reason for going to the state fair was entertainment.

What Do People See at the Fair?

Only the Washington County Fair study tried to determine specifically what it was people saw at the fair. Junior class exhibits and livestock attracted the largest number of people, 88 and 86 percent respectively. Other popular attractions were the midway (78 percent), commercial exhibits (73 percent), and farm machinery (70 percent).

What Makes a Good Fair?

The 1964 Platos study reports on some of the factors extension personnel use to evaluate fairs. The most important criterion used by them is the number of educational exhibits at the fair--about 70 percent of the county agents, assistant agents and home agents cited this factor.

Some 70 percent of the county agents also reported fair attendance as being important, while both assistant agents and home agents (about 60 percent of each group) felt that whether or not the exhibits showed current market trends was an important factor in evaluating fairs.

What About the Educational Value of Fairs?

All People. Most of the county extension personnel studied by Platos feel that the overall educational value of county fairs is more or less equal to other educational activities in which they engage. Of the county personnel serving as fair secretaries, many said they did so because of the educational value of fairs--82 and 100 percent of the county agents and assistant agents respectively. A number of them, however, do feel that the space allocated to educational exhibits is so restricted that it is impossible to show all of the exhibits they feel are necessary.

Young People. Considering the fair's educational value in terms of Junior-Class competition, the Sauk County study found that 69 percent of the local 4-H leaders feel that exhibiting at county fairs helps the club program "very much" and 65 percent feel that club members learn "very much" from exhibiting at the fair. As for the 4-H club members, 44 percent said they learned "very much" from exhibiting at the county fair, 29 percent said they learned "much" and another 24 percent said they learned "some" from their exhibiting experience. Both groups overwhelmingly agree that there should be a county fair at which 4-H members can exhibit.

Are People Satisfied with the Fair?

The Washington County study found fairgoers to be fairly well satisfied with the fair--36 percent said they were "very satisfied" and 59 percent reported being "satisfied." Only two percent of the fairgoers who responded to the questionnaire said they were not satisfied.

Commenting on specific attractions at the fair, Washington County fairgoers were most satisfied with the youth exhibits and least satisfied with the farm machinery exhibit. Rating the fair's physical facilities, these same respondents were most satisfied with 1) the parking and 2) the ease of finding their way at the fair; and least satisfied with the appearance of the fairgrounds.

Another indication of satisfaction with the fair are ratings of exhibitors--68 percent of the 4-H members said they "very much" enjoyed their exhibiting experience.

What Do People (Dis)like About the Fair?

Studies on fairs generally find that youth exhibits are very popular with fairgoers and this also was true for the Washington County Fair. Almost half of the respondents said they liked the main exhibit building "best"--this is the building that houses all youth exhibits except livestock. Another 19 percent said they liked the livestock show "best."

About one-third of the respondents indicated that they liked the midway "least," 12 percent dislike the commercial exhibits and nine percent disliked the crowded conditions.

What Are Some of the Suggestions for Improving Fairs?

About one-fourth of the Washington County fairgoers responding to this question said that the crowded conditions needed to be improved; another 16 percent saw a need for improving the midway and 11 percent for improving the restrooms.

From a different perspective, the most common suggestion for improvement made by county extension personnel was to have fairs allow other groups (non 4-H) to exhibit at fairs. Another frequent suggestion was to have the fair include a Sunday date. A little more than one-third suggested that

4-H livestock be sold at county fairs and quite a few suggested that junior livestock shows be combined.

Are Fairs Changing Over Time?

Platos, questioning county agents about the changing emphasis of county fairs during the 1958-63 period, found a marked change in favor of 4-H fairs and educational exhibits. A typical response was: "The county fair during the past five years has essentially become a youth fair. The only exception to this would be the adult art and adult flower division which has increased, whereas all other adult divisions have decreased."

Are Fair Buildings Available for Multiple Use?

More than half the county agents queried in 1964 reported that their local fair had undertaken a building program during the past decade. They had built, on the average, about three buildings per fair--most of which were of the multiple-use type. About 50 percent of the county agents also indicated that their counties were planning to build new multi-purpose fair buildings. This suggests, as Platos concludes, that many counties recognize the need to use their fair buildings for a longer period of time, as well as the necessity for having a large central county building in which to hold county events.

More than half of the county agents, in 1964, indicated that fair buildings in their area were of sufficient construction and capability that they could be used for other activities. About the same number reported that their local fair buildings were, in fact, being used for other purposes--ranging from county extension programs to breed and animal shows and sales, to sporting events and rental for storage.

What Would Be the Effect of Consolidation?

In view of some of the difficulties faced by fairs, some thought has been given towards a possible consolidation of fairs. About one-half

of the county extension personnel in the Platos study feel that small fairs should combine, regardless of whether the small fair is a junior fair or not. At the same time, they unanimously agree that fairs are a worthwhile community event and that consolidation would have a harmful effect on a community that loses its fair. There is also a near-unanimous feeling against relocating fairs--primarily because of the cost involved.

The findings of these five studies, while instructive, are not sufficient to answer most of the questions now raised concerning county and district fairs. The most comprehensive of these studies--the one by John W. Ryan--deals almost entirely with the state fair. George Bernard's study focuses on the state fair as well. The studies by Hovland and Halbach are limited to two individual fairs. Finally, Platos' study obtains the viewpoints of only one segment of the state's population involved with county and district fairs. Each of these studies, while having meritorious attributes, likewise has methodological deficiencies upon which the present study will strive to improve.

Outline of the Study

Even more than most social institutions, fairs meet the varied needs of many segments of society. In attempting to evaluate the importance of fairs for the people of Wisconsin it seems necessary to obtain information from most of these many societal segments which have interests in fairs. The various sample groups outlined below have been selected with this criterion in mind.

Data Collection

Sources. As shown in Table 2, data will be obtained from: 1) persons living throughout the state, 2) people living in selected counties and from 3) existing sources. Approximately 3,500 individuals will have

Table 2. Projected Sources, Types, and Amount of Data for Wisconsin County and District Fair Study

Statewide	County
Personal Interviews:	
a. Residents of Wisconsin, 14 years of age and older, Sample, N* = 600 (Conducted by Survey Research Laboratory, University of Wisconsin.)	a. Attenders at county and district fairs Sample, N = 1,200 b. Law officers, Sample, N = 24 c. Commercial dealers, Sample, N = 48
Mailed Questionnaires:	
a. County board chairmen, All, N = 72 b. Fair secretaries, All, N = 76 c. Associate members of Wisconsin Fair Association All, N = 70 d. Fair judges, Sample, N = 200 e. County extension personnel, Sample, N = 140 f. Commercial exhibitors, Sample, N = 200 g. Open-Class exhibitors, Sample, N = 200 h. Junior-Class exhibitors, Sample, N = 200 i. Youth leaders, Sample, N = 200 j. Vocational agriculture teachers, All, N = 250	
Newspapers:	
a. Clippings from 241 Wisconsin newspapers	
Available Data:	
a. Wisconsin Agriculturist Survey, N = 700 b. U. S. Census of Population c. State reports on County and District Fairs	

* N = number of people from whom data will be obtained.

provided data for the study before it is concluded. About half of these people will have been contacted in personal interviews and the other half will have completed mailed questionnaires. Given below is a listing of the people who will be contacted together with an indication of the roles they perform relative to fairs:

a. County Board Chairman--often responsible for providing county funds for fairs' operations, and involved with the fairs' economic, social and political effects.

b. Fair Secretaries--integral part of the fair management.

c. Associate Members of the Wisconsin Fair Association--suppliers to fairs of carnivals, shows, tents, ribbons, etc.

d. Fair Judges--judge the Junior-Class and Open-Class exhibits and usually receive a fee for their services.

e. County Extension Personnel--involved in the educational aspects of fairs, particularly through 4-H Clubs and sometimes through the fair's operations.

f. Commercial Exhibitors--display and sell ideas and merchandise to fair attenders.

g. Open-Class Exhibitors--adults and some youth who enter exhibits to be judged in competition with others for premiums, ribbons and prestige.

h. Youth-Exhibitors--young people who enter exhibits to be judged in competition with others for awards through youth organizations.

i. Youth Leaders--heads of youth organizations that sponsor competitive exhibiting at fairs.

j. Vocational Agriculture (VoAg) Teachers--high school teachers of agriculture who through the Future Farmers of America (FFA) organization sponsor some youth exhibitors.

k. Fair Attenders--the "public" who come to the fairs for various reasons.

l. Law Officers--those charged with the primary responsibility for law enforcement at fairs.

m. Commercial Dealers--merchants whose business operations may be affected by having fairs in the vicinity.

n. Wisconsin Citizens--persons 14 years of age and older living throughout the state who may or may not be directly influenced by fairs.

In addition to the sources of data mentioned above, newspapers from throughout the state have been read for information relative to fairs within the state. This information is being analyzed to provide answers to questions concerning fairs' importance to the state. Moreover, the Wisconsin Agriculturist recently conducted a survey of readers in the state dealing with their opinions of county and district fairs. The results of this study will be made available for use in the present study. Additionally, census data and data provided by the state regarding county and district fairs will be utilized.

Samples. The sample of 600 Wisconsin residents used by the Wisconsin Research Laboratory is a probability sample of multi-stage area design.[30]

Samples used in connection with the questionnaires for fair judges and Open and Junior-Class exhibitors are simple-random samples derived from name lists of 1970 participants supplied by the Wisconsin Exposition Center. A simple random sample of 4-H Club leaders in the state was drawn from a list of names supplied by University Extension, University of Wisconsin.

A simple random sample of commercial exhibitors was drawn from a list supplied by fair secretaries from six purposively selected fairs.[31] The counties were selected so as to assure representativeness on the following criteria: a) type of fair (county or district), b) exhibitors (Junior-Class only or Junior and Open-Class), c) amount of state aid received, d) geographical location, e) population distribution of state and f) date of fair. The last criterion required that the fairs be consecutively scheduled, so as to permit interviews at each fair to be conducted by the same interviewers.

Fair attenders will be selected only from those six purposively selected fairs. Law officers and commercial dealers will likewise be selected randomly, the latter using an area sampling, from places where the six purposively selected fairs are held.

Interviewing and Instruments. All interviewing done on this study will be done by trained and experienced interviewers.

Questionnaires and schedules used in the study will have been subjected to sufficient pretesting to assure reliability and validity prior to their being used. First returns from some samples involving questionnaires suggest that comprehension ease and motivation has been achieved to an acceptable degree. For example, over 99 percent of the first questionnaires mailed out (for Junior-Class exhibitors) have been returned). Some of the persons completing the questionnaires are as young as eight years of age. A return of more than 92 percent has now (February 15, 1971) been received from Open-Class exhibitors.

Data Analysis. Information obtained through interviews, questionnaires, and from available data will, for the most part, be prepared for analysis using punch cards and processed with a Univac 1108 computer. The basic analysis will consist of simple tabulations, cross tabulations, correlations, and tests of significance.

Reports

Owing to the urgency of early availability of results from this study, the study's reports will not be published in the traditional way. Instead of having a single, final report of the study with perhaps a progress report or two, there will be a series of preliminary reports published as data become available, and a final report. There will be relatively little interpretation done in the preliminary reports and

relatively few conclusions drawn as compared with the final report. Instead, the preliminary reports will focus on presenting the data. On the other hand, the final report will emphasize interpretation and draw conclusions based on the entire study, rather than on segments of it.

As presently planned, the reports will be as follows:

Preliminary Report No. 1, Background of the Study

Preliminary Report No. 2, Junior and Open-Class Exhibitors

Preliminary Report No. 3, Fair Judges, Vocational Agriculture Teachers, Youth Leaders, and County Extension Personnel

Preliminary Report No. 4, Population, Participation and Content Analysis

Preliminary Report No. 5, Associate Members and Commercial Exhibitors

Preliminary Report No. 6, County Board Chairmen and Fair Secretaries

Preliminary Report No. 7, State-wide Survey

Preliminary Report No. 8, Fair Attenders, Law Officers, and Commercial Operators

Final Report, Wisconsin County and District Fair Study

While it is not yet possible to establish definite availability dates for these reports, it is anticipated that the first report will be available in February 1971, and the final report in December 1971, with the other reports becoming available periodically during the intervening time. Copies of these reports may be obtained by writing to the Center of Applied Sociology, Department of Rural Sociology, 610 WARF Office Building, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin 53706.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Wayne C. Neely, The Agricultural Fair. Columbia University Press, New York, 1935, pp. 27-34.

[2]Neely, op. cit., pp. 27-34.

[3]The Yearbook of Agriculture, 1940. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 1940, pp. 113-115.

[4]Neely, op. cit., pp. 37-43.

[5]Yearbook of Agriculture, 1940, p. 114.

[6]Neely, op. cit., p. 62.

[7]Ibid., pp. 76-77.

[8]Ibid., p. 122.

[9]Encyclopedia Britannica, 1969, p. 962.

[10]Charles B. Elston, "A History of County Fairs in Nineteenth Century Wisconsin." Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1966, p. 23.

[11]Ibid., p. 25.

[12]Ibid., p. 26.

[13]Ibid., p. 32.

[14]C. J. Golpin and Emily F. Hoag, The Rural Community Fair. Bulletin 307, Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Nov., 1919.

[15]Elston, op. cit., p. 32.

[16]Data given below concerning county and district fairs in Wisconsin were obtained from the annual report on Wisconsin County and District Fairs issued by the Wisconsin Exposition Department, Exposition Center, Milwaukee, Wisconsin for the years mentioned. See p. 42 of the 1969 report for attendance totals. The 1970 report is not available at this time (February 1971).

[17]Estimate was based on a straight-line projection averaged with estimates, based on correlations.

[18]Milwaukee Journal, September 22, 1970.

[19]Advance Report on 1970 Census of Population in Wisconsin. Bureau of State Planning, Dept. of Administration, State of Wisconsin, Document No. BSP-IS-71-1 (3), Madison, January, 1971, p. 4.

[20]Report on Wisconsin County and District Fairs: 1969, p. 26.

[21]Op. cit., p. 20.

[22]Open-Class exhibitors enter more exhibits on the average than do Junior-Class exhibitors; 11.1 and 4.3 respectively in 1969.

[23]Data reported for Illinois derived from Agricultural and Industrial Fairs Receiving Aid From the State of Illinois in 1969. Illinois Department of Agriculture, Springfield, December, 1969.

[24]Amusement Business. Eighth Annual California Special, April 4, 1970, pp. 17-23.

[25]Amusement Business, April 4, 1970, p. 6.

[26]Ibid., p. 7.

[27]Ibid., p. 21.

[28]Wisconsin Agriculturist, August 8, 1970, p. 12.

[29]Reprinted with permission of Mr. F. J. Griffith, Deputy Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture.

[30]For a detailed description of the sampling procedures used by the Survey Research Laboratory, University of Wisconsin on this state-wide sample see: Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory publication M-27, "The WSRL Sample of Wisconsin Housing Units," April, 1970, Madison, Wisconsin.

[31]See discussion of purposive sampling and its limitations as compared with probability samples in Morris H. Hansen, William N. Hurwitz, and William G. Madow, Sample Survey Methods and Theory, Vol. 1, New York, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1953, pp. 71-74.

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The enclosed information may be of interest to you. Additional copies are available on request.

Sincerely,

Donald E. Johnson

Donald E. Johnson
Extension Sociologist

University of Wisconsin . U.S. Department of Agriculture . Wis. Counties Cooperating